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arms

The problem is to stop the technological race before a computer accident triggers a nuclear weapons launch, according to one speaker in a debate on improving the nation's security.

The other speaker told about 600 people Saturday attending a conference at Oregon State University called "What About the Russians?" that President Reagan's proposed increases in defense spending were needed to effect a stable balance in weapons.

Attacking the arms race was Arthur Macy Cox, who was a CIA official overseeing operations against the Soviet Union and author of "Russian Roulette: The Superpower Game." He also was an adviser to Averell Harriman and George Marshall of the State Department.

Defending the administration's defense spending plans was William Van Cleave, co-founder on the Present Danger and an adviser to President Reagan.

"Too many people are concerned about U.S. weapons that do not yet exist (rather) than with Soviet weapons that do exist," said Van Cleave.

He called the Soviet Union a "repressive, imperialistic regime" with an insatiable desire for expansion.

Cox said he thought Americans had a right to be concerned about Soviet intentions after World War II, but the world situation has changed. He said both countries now have the ability to destroy the other.

"The use of nuclear weapons as an extension of political will is no longer feasible," he said.

He said the concern now is to prevent a nuclear accident.

"The finger on the trigger is getting very, very jittery," he said.

*file only*